

THE CHATTAHOOCHEE-FLINT REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT CENTER'S ROLE IN LOCAL AND REGIONAL WATER SUPPLY ISSUES

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Abstract Chattahoochee-Flint Regional Development Center (CFRDC) is a technical assistance and advisory agency serving member local governments. CFRDC's purview includes assistance to local governments in addressing the feasibility and financing of public water supplies, as well as water quality protection mechanisms. For more than a decade, water supply and quality concerns have been a priority for our local governments, and CFRDC has been responsive in local, regional, and interstate efforts in addressing water supply and water quality. Specifically, CFRDC has addressed resource protection; development of public water supply systems; alternatives analyses for water supply; and basinwide studies, plans, and projects.

Introduction Chattahoochee-Flint Regional Development Center, named for the two rivers bounding the region, serves the west-central Georgia area comprising Carroll, Coweta, Heard, Meriwether, and Troup Counties and the municipalities contained therein. The region's estimated population is approximately 220,000. Due to major transportation corridors and proximity to the Metro Atlanta region, many of the jurisdictions are now experiencing urban sprawl growth patterns, rapid population increase, and extensive conversion of land to more intense uses. In addition, the region is immediately downstream of the Metro Atlanta area, and due to both point source and nonpoint source water quality problems, realizes little of the resource value of the Chattahoochee River. These conditions

impose a compound effect on local governments in the region as they address their individual and collective ability to provide adequate supplies of clean water to meet their growing demand. CFRDC continues to be in a position to safeguard and represent local government interests in addressing local, regional, and interstate water supply and quality issues.

Resource protection CFRDC has developed a Regional River Corridor Protection Plan for the Chattahoochee River on behalf of Carroll, Coweta, Heard, and Troup Counties and the municipalities of Whitesburg, Franklin, and West Point. This plan complies with the Department of Community Affairs' Planning Minimum Standards and Procedures, and is adopted as an amendment to the Comprehensive Plans of the affected local governments.

CFRDC is currently addressing local protection of resources through the development of separate regional model overlay zones for protection of the following sensitive resources: wellheads, protected river corridors, water supply watersheds, and groundwater recharge areas. Overlay zones are a land use control mechanism ideally suited to resource protection purposes. CFRDC selected overlay zones over freestanding ordinances for this application for several reasons: 1) overlay zones do not require local governments to rezone any affected areas; 2) overlay zones are easy to implement from a permit review and codes enforcement standpoint; 3)

overlay zones become part of the zoning ordinance and therefore simplify the permit application process. CFRDC expects to complete these model overlay zones by July of 1997.

Public water supply systems CFRDC has provided assistance to numerous local governments in addressing all aspects of system development, from identifying sources of public water supply, to cultivating cooperative relationships between local governments who share resources, to identifying and securing the needed financing for system implementation. Examples of these successful efforts include:

- **Heard County:** CFRDC assisted in locating a new surface water supply source, and secured funding for the development of a distribution system to create a county-wide water system.

- **City of Greenville:** When the City of Greenville experienced declining water levels in one of its two municipal supply wells, CFRDC secured funding to install a new public well and to construct a new elevated storage tank to improve system hydraulics. During this process, the City's primary well was discovered to have been contaminated with waste product from a nearby industry. The eventual resolution of the City's demand for additional water supply occurred as CFRDC worked with the funding source to redirect funds for the construction of a finished water transmission main and negotiated a contract for the sale of finished water with the City of LaGrange.

- **Town of Gay:** The drought conditions of the late 1980's caused widespread shortages in domestic supplies of groundwater. This was particularly a problem in the Town of Gay, where most of the individual wells in this town of 200 went

dry. CFRDC assisted the Town in analyzing the feasibility of groundwater and surface water supply alternatives, identifying potential high-yielding well sites, planning the distribution system development, and securing the funding necessary to develop a public water supply system.

- **City of Hogansville:** Hogansville's primary source of public water supply provided less than three days' raw water storage in the late 1980's. CFRDC assisted the City in analyzing alternatives for additional public water supply and secured the funding necessary to implement the required system improvements. CFRDC also provided a simplified rate study to determine recommended rate increases needed to maintain the City of Hogansville's water system enterprise fund.

- **City of Whitesburg:** This municipality of 500 relies on four public supply wells, one of which failed catastrophically in the winter of 1991. CFRDC assisted in securing the funding necessary to construct a new supply well. However, ongoing problems with the City's wells indicate that additional steps are needed to properly manage the system (see Hollingsworth and Atkins, 1995 Georgia Water Resources Conference). CFRDC will continue to assist the City of Whitesburg in the coming months to implement a groundwater management system that will maximize system performance.

Alternatives analysis CFRDC has conducted preliminary water supply alternatives analyses for the jurisdictions of Hogansville, Gay, Whitesburg, Carroll County, and Meriwether County. In each of these cases, CFRDC designed individualized scopes of work to address the specific needs of the community. CFRDC's work for Carroll County was not a complete alternatives analysis; rather a preliminary

groundwater availability study which Carroll County then applied as a component of the alternatives analysis required under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act.

Basinwide studies and plans As the concept of regionalism is beginning to mature, CFRDC has been involved at various levels in numerous basinwide and regional studies and plans addressing water supply and water quality. These include:

- the Governor's Advisory Council for the tri-state study of the Alabama-Coosa-Tallapoosa/Appalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint basins;

- the Technical Advisory Group for the West Georgia Regional Water Authority's analysis of public supply alternatives to meet the future demand of a five-county service area;

- DNR's Basinwide Management Plan for the Chattahoochee River;

- Atlanta Regional Commission's South Chattahoochee Corridor Study.

In addition to these, during FY 97 CFRDC will be involved in a number of regional projects funded by grants from the Chattahoochee Basin Downstream Assistance program. CFRDC is the grant recipient for two projects which specifically address basinwide water quality problems. These include:

- development of an educational video, formatted for airing on Georgia Public Television, that presents a comprehensive treatment of issues, opportunities, and competing interests throughout the Chattahoochee basin; and

- development and implementation of an educational and outreach program for cost-effective erosion and sedimentation control activities in the Chattahoochee basin. This project is also known as "Dirt Panel II".

Both of these projects will commence during early 1997, and preliminary information will be available at the time of the conference.